under consideration of the Government. Since setting up of regulator involves enactment of legislation by the Parliament, it may not be possible to indicate the exact time frame for the same. Within the extant legal framework, appointment of an independent regulator for coal sector would result in more optimal development and conservation of coal resources, more effective regulation, adoption of best mining practices, rational pricing, better distribution, evolution of a more competitive market etc. It would also help in creating a level playing field for new entrants in the coal sector.

Import of coal

†1834. SHRI AMIR ALAM KHAN: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has decided to import coal during 2008 and 2009;

(b) if so, the quantity of coal imported/ to be imported;

(c) the name of the country and price at which it was imported/to be imported;

(d) the reserved stock of coal in tonnes in the country and the production of coal during the above mentioned period; and

(e) the extent to which the shortage of coal in domestic sector would be met as a result thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI SRIPRAKASH JAISWAL): (a) to (c) As per the present import policy of the Government, coal can be imported by any entity under Open General Licence (OGL) on payment of applicable import duties. Coal India Ltd., has not been importing coal directly so far.

(d) The total closing stock of coal with CIL as on 01.04.2008 and 01.04.2009 was 45.59 mts and 47.72 mts respectively. The production during 2007-08 and 2008-09 was 379.46 mts and 403.73 mts respectively.

(e) During the year 2007-08 and 2008-09, the shortage of coal was met by imports by the end users which were 49.79 mts and 59.00 mts respectively.

Use of railway racks by MCL in Talchar coalfield area

1835. SHRI PYARIMOHAN MOHAPATRA: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Mahanadi Coalfields Ltd. (MCL) is encouraging movement of coal by railway racks even within short distances, say within a radius of 100 km. from Talchar;

(b) what is the number of displaced/ substantially affected persons who are earning a livelihood by transporting coal by road in Talchar coalfields area; and

(c) considering the distress which would be caused to the DPs and SAPs of Talchar area, whether Government would consider directing the MCL authorities not to use railway racks within a radius of 100 km from Talchar?

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI SRIPRAKASH JAISWAL): (a) Since sale of coal is made on free on Rail/Road (FOR) basis, the decisions in respect of mode of transportation is taken by the buyer and Mahanadi Coalfields Limited has limited scope, irrespective of distance, in encouraging movement of coal by Rail.

(b) About 9382 persons are earning their livelihood by engaging themselves as tipper operator mechanic and helpers with Ex-Servicemen Transporting Agency and Civilian Transport Contractors.

(c) As indicated in the reply to part (a) above, Mahanadi Coalfields Limited has limited scope to consider mode of transport to be used by consumers. However, Mahanadi Coalfields Ltd. encourages Project Affected People (PAPs) to from a Co-operative Society and start transporting coal as contractor at a approved scheduled rate without entering into tendering process. In addition to that, nearby consumers are also being allowed to transport by road and displaced/Substantially affected persons are being engaged by them also. In addition to above, 1900 trucks of coal are being lifted by different consumers through road transport from Talcher field.

Underground fire in coal mines in Jharkhand

1836. SHRI T.K. RANGARAJAN: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether underground fire has been noticed in the coal mines in Jharkhand;

(b) if so, whether Government has calculated the extent of area where this problem exists;

(c) the reasons for the problem;

(d) whether any action has been taken to contain the fire in these mines; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI SRIPRAKASH JAISWAL): (a) As reported by Coal India Limited (CIL), three subsidiary companies of CIL namely Eastern Coalfield Limited (ECL), Bharat Coking Coal Limited (BCCL) and Central Coalfield Limited (CCL) are in operation in the State of Jharkhand. Out of above three subsidiaries, in two subsidiaries namely BCCL and CCL, fire has been noticed. In BCCL fire has been noticed over an extensive area in Jharia Coalfield and in CCL fire has been noticed in two underground coal mines.

(b) BCCL : At the time of Nationalisation of coal mines, BCCL had inherited 70 mine fires, covering an area of 17.32 sq. km. Due to some concrete efforts by BCCL, 10 fires could be liquidated completely. In the meantime, 7 more fires have been identified in Jharia coalfield. Presently, there are 67 fires out of which 9 are underground fires sealed behind the stopping and are now at dormant state. Remaining 58 fires cover a total surface area of 8.90 sq. km.

CCL : In CCL leasehold area, fire exists in Sarubera and Churi underground mines only with the approximate extent of fire being 26719 square meters.